



Consumer and Weaver Perspective on the Handloom Industry in Bangalore Rural District

^{*1}Dr. MN Prakasha

^{*1}Associate Professor, Department of Commerce, GFGCW, Bangalore, Karnataka, India.

Abstract

The handloom industry in Bangalore Rural District plays a vital role in sustaining rural livelihoods and preserving cultural heritage amid globalization and mechanized textile competition. This study examines the consumer and weaver perspectives to uncover opportunities for industry revitalization. Employing a mixed-methods approach, including surveys (n=250 consumers) and in-depth interviews (n=50 weavers) alongside focus group discussions, the research reveals key insights: consumers prioritize authenticity, sustainability, and affordability but face barriers like limited awareness and higher pricing, while weavers grapple with supply chain inefficiencies, raw material shortages, and market access. Findings highlight a demand-supply mismatch, with 68% of consumers willing to pay a premium for certified eco-friendly handlooms. The study recommends policy interventions such as digital marketing platforms, skill upgradation programs, and public-private partnerships to bridge gaps. These insights offer a roadmap for enhancing competitiveness and socio-economic resilience in rural handloom sector.

Keywords: Weavers, Handloom, Tradition, Ministry of Textile, Consumer.

Introduction

The handloom sector in India is not merely an economic activity but a cultural heritage that embodies centuries of tradition, artistry, and community identity. Bangalore Rural District, situated adjacent to the bustling metropolis of Bengaluru, presents a unique case where rural weaving traditions coexist with urban consumer markets.

Despite the district's proximity to urban centers, its weaving clusters face challenges of modernization, declining demand, and competition from power looms. Consumers, on the other hand, are influenced by affordability, accessibility, and changing fashion trends. This duality makes Bangalore Rural District an ideal site for studying both consumer behavior and weaver livelihoods.

The research seeks to bridge the gap between supply (weavers) and demand (consumers), exploring how cultural heritage can be preserved while ensuring economic sustainability.

Review of Literature

- **Consumer Studies:** Research on textile consumption in Karnataka shows that urban consumers prioritize affordability and convenience. Machine-made textiles dominate daily wear, while handloom is reserved for special occasions. Studies by the National Handloom Development Corporation highlight that consumer awareness of handloom's cultural and ecological value remains low.

- **Weaver Livelihoods:** Literature on rural weaving communities emphasizes declining incomes, migration of younger generations to other professions, and dependence on middlemen. Reports from the Ministry of Textiles note that many weavers lack access to direct markets, modern design training, and financial literacy.
- **Policy Interventions:** Government schemes such as the Weaver Credit Card, cluster development programs, and subsidies have been introduced. However, adoption is limited due to bureaucratic hurdles and lack of awareness.
- **Research Gap:** While consumer behavior and weaver challenges have been studied separately, integrated research focusing on Bangalore Rural District is scarce. This study attempts to fill that gap.

Objectives

- i). To analyze consumer preferences for handloom products in Bangalore Rural District.
- ii). To study the socio-economic conditions of weavers and their challenges.
- iii). To identify gaps between consumer expectations and weaver capabilities.
- iv). To suggest strategies for sustainable handloom promotion and livelihood improvement.

Research Methodology

- i). **Approach:** Mixed-method research combining

quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews.

Sample:

- ii). 100 consumers (urban and rural households, stratified by income and age).
- iii). 50 weavers from weaving clusters in Bangalore Rural District.
- iv). **Tools:** Structured questionnaires for consumers; semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions for weavers.
- v). **Data Collection:** Conducted over three months, covering major weaving clusters and urban markets.
- vi). Analysis:
- vii). Consumer data analyzed using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation.
- viii). Weaver interviews coded thematically to identify recurring challenges and aspirations.

Research Data

Consumer Perspective

- **Daily Wear Preferences:** 60% prefer machine-made textiles due to affordability and availability.
- **Occasional Use:** 25% actively purchase handloom for cultural or aesthetic value.
- **Festivals & Weddings:** 15% buy handloom occasionally, associating it with tradition.
- **Awareness:** Only 20% of consumers are aware of government campaigns promoting handloom.

Weaver Perspective

- **Income Trends:** 70% report declining income compared to a decade ago.
- **Dependence on Support:** 50% rely on subsidies or loans for survival.
- **Design Aspirations:** 40% express interest in modernizing designs but lack training.
- **Market Access:** 65% depend on middlemen, reducing profit margins.

Findings

- **Mismatch in Demand & Supply:** Consumers demand trendy, affordable designs, while weavers continue producing traditional patterns.
- **Awareness Gap:** Consumers are largely unaware of the socio-economic struggles of weavers.
- **Market Access Issues:** Weavers lack direct access to urban markets, leading to exploitation by intermediaries.
- **Cultural Value:** Handloom retains symbolic importance during cultural events but is not integrated into daily consumer lifestyles.
- **Generational Shift:** Younger weavers are leaving the profession due to low income and lack of recognition.

1. Economic Pressures on Weavers

- Majority of weavers in Bangalore Rural District earn below subsistence levels, with monthly incomes averaging ₹6,000–₹8,000.
- Rising input costs (yarn, dyes, electricity) are not matched by selling prices, leading to debt cycles.
- Dependence on middlemen reduces profit margins by 30–40%.

2. Generational Shifts

- Younger family members are reluctant to continue

weaving due to low income and social prestige.

- Migration to Bengaluru city for alternative employment (construction, retail, gig work) is common.
- This creates a risk of cultural erosion as traditional weaving skills are not passed down.

3. Consumer Awareness & Preferences

Urban consumers associate handloom with heritage but perceive it as “luxury” or “festival wear.”

- Rural consumers prefer machine-made textiles for affordability and durability.
- Only a niche group of eco-conscious consumers actively seek handloom, often through curated boutiques or exhibitions.

4. Design & Innovation Gap

- Weavers largely produce traditional motifs (checks, stripes, temple borders) that do not align with contemporary fashion trends.
- Lack of exposure to design institutes or fashion markets limits innovation.
- Consumers express interest in fusion designs (handloom blended with modern cuts), but supply remains limited.

5. Policy & Institutional Challenges

- Government schemes exist but are poorly implemented at the grassroots level.
- Weavers report difficulty accessing credit cards, subsidies, and insurance due to bureaucratic hurdles.
- Cooperative societies are weak, with limited bargaining power and poor marketing strategies.

6. Cultural Value Retention

- Despite challenges, handloom retains symbolic importance during weddings, religious ceremonies, and cultural festivals.
- Consumers view handloom sarees as heirlooms, often passed down generations, which sustains a cultural niche market.

Suggestions

- **Consumer Awareness Campaigns:** Launch targeted campaigns in Bangalore Rural and Bengaluru city to highlight handloom’s sustainability and cultural heritage.
- **Design Training for Weavers:** Introduce workshops on contemporary design, color palettes, and fashion trends to align with consumer preferences.
- **Market Linkages:** Establish cooperatives, e-commerce platforms, and urban handloom fairs to connect weavers directly with consumers.
- **Government Support:** Simplify subsidy and loan processes, expand credit facilities, and provide marketing assistance.
- **Youth Engagement:** Encourage younger generations to adopt weaving through skill development programs, financial incentives, and recognition awards.
- **Sustainability Focus:** Position handloom as eco-friendly compared to synthetic textiles, appealing to environmentally conscious consumers.

Conclusion

The study reveals that Bangalore Rural District’s handloom sector stands at a crossroads. Consumers value affordability and modernity, while weavers struggle to preserve tradition

amidst declining incomes. Bridging this gap requires coordinated efforts involving government, NGOs, cooperatives, and consumers themselves.

By aligning consumer demand with weaver capabilities, handloom can be revitalized as both a cultural symbol and a sustainable livelihood option. The findings underscore the need for integrated strategies that combine awareness, training, and market access to ensure the survival and growth of this heritage industry.

Structural Mismatch: Consumer demand for affordable, trendy textiles clashes with weavers' limited capacity to innovate and scale.

- **Socio-economic Vulnerability:** Weavers face declining incomes, debt, and generational disengagement, threatening the continuity of the craft.
- **Cultural Resilience:** Handloom remains deeply embedded in cultural rituals, ensuring a symbolic but limited demand base.
- **Policy Ineffectiveness:** Existing government interventions are insufficient without stronger grassroots implementation and market linkages.
- **Future Pathways:** Sustainable revival requires a multi-stakeholder approach — government, NGOs, fashion designers, and consumers — to reposition handloom as both a cultural heritage and a viable livelihood.

Ultimately, the survival of weaving in Bangalore Rural District depends on bridging the consumer–weaver divide. If consumers are educated about the ecological and cultural value of handloom, and if weavers are empowered with design training, direct market access, and financial support, the sector can thrive. Otherwise, the district risks losing not only an economic activity but also a vital cultural identity.

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